

The Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle— A Symbol of California's Wild Ocean

Support the California Marine Reptile Bill (AB1776, Fong)
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Designating the Pacific leatherback sea turtle as California's marine reptile will recognize the importance of state coastal waters to the survival of this ancient, remarkable and endangered ocean dweller. It would join the desert tortoise, gray whale, golden poppy and grizzly bear as symbols of California's biodiversity and conservation ethic.

The California Marine Reptile Bill - AB1776 proposes to:

- Designate the Pacific leatherback sea turtle as the official state marine reptile.
- Establish October 15 every year as Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation Day in California.
- Encourage public schools to include Pacific leatherback sea turtles in their teaching lessons and curriculum whenever possible.
- Encourage state residents to participate in a statewide, voluntary leatherback sea turtle watch to report sightings of Pacific leatherback sea turtles.
- Support conservation and protection of Pacific leatherback sea turtles and their habitats.

The Pacific Leatherback: Pacific leatherback sea turtles are "living dinosaurs," having survived 100 million years virtually unchanged. The leatherback is the largest, deepest diving, and most amazing of all sea turtles and it depends on healthy oceans. Adult leatherbacks can grow to up to nine feet long and weigh up to 2,000 lbs—as big as a Mini Cooper car! It is the only one of the seven species of sea turtles with ridges on its back instead of a hard shell. Today, this ancient ocean dweller is endangered and at risk of extinction.

The Pacific Leatherback Relies on California's Coast: The Pacific leatherback sea turtle swims 6,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean to feed on jellyfish that are abundant along the California coast during summer and fall months. Sea turtle biologists using satellite tracking discovered only in the past decade that these leatherbacks migrate here from distant nesting beaches in remote Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and island nations in the Western Pacific.

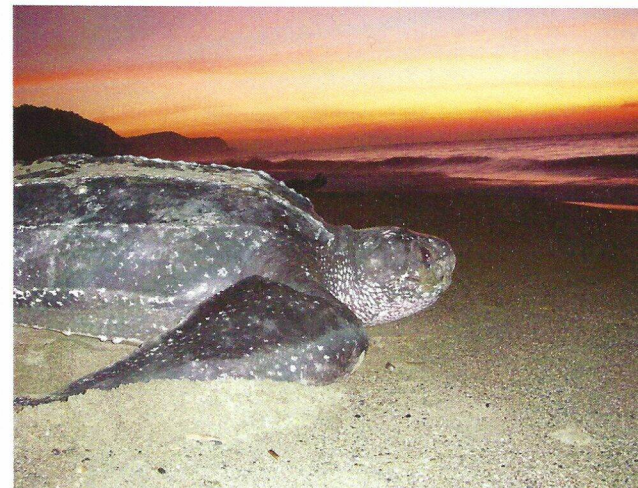
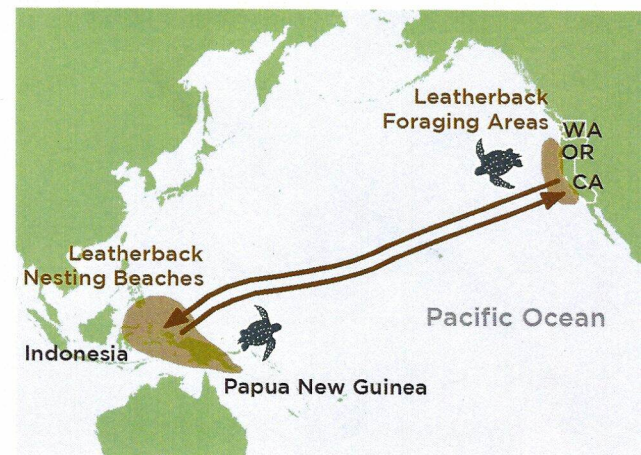
Early this year, nearly 42,000 square miles of ocean waters along the U.S. West Coast were designated as leatherback critical habitat under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, including 16,910 square miles of California's coastal waters. Any new activities occurring in these waters must prevent harm to the leatherback's feeding areas and prey species.

Pacific Leatherback Threats and Protection: Pacific leatherbacks are among the most imperiled of any sea turtle population in any ocean basin on Earth having declined by approximately 90 percent in the last 25 years. Drastic population declines resulted primarily from human activities such as capture in fisheries, egg poaching, habitat loss, marine plastic pollution and climate change. The leatherback sea turtle was listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act in 1970. With increased awareness, education, and cooperative conservation, we can ensure the continued survival of the Pacific leatherback.

Take Action: Please send a letter of support to Assemblyman Fong and your state representatives. Get the latest news at www.SeaTurtles.org/AB1776

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project (SeaTurtles.org) is an initiative of Turtle Island Restoration Network, a California-based nonprofit conservation organization. SeaTurtles.org's mission is to protect and restore endangered sea turtles and marine biodiversity worldwide.

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Top photo © Doug Perrine/SeaPics.com: A Pacific leatherback at sea
Map showing migratory route of Pacific leatherback sea turtles: GreenInfo
Bottom photo by Deasy Lontoh: A Pacific leatherback nester in Indonesia